

"The Old Chateau"  
(Cavalier Jouet Mansion)  
408 Rahway Avenue  
Elizabeth, Union County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

"The Old Chateau"\*  
(Cavalier Jouet Mansion)  
408 Rahway Avenue  
Elizabeth, Union County, New Jersey

Owner: Louis Schmieder, 599 Adams Avenue, Elizabeth,  
New Jersey

Occupants: Tenants

Date of Erection: About 1757-1760\*

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Cavalier Jouet (1734-1810) original owner

Present Condition: Mostly original; modern frame  
porch at rear was damaged by fire 1938,  
after survey

Number of Stories: Two and one-half in main house, two  
in flanking wings, over cellar

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - brownstone masonry

Exterior walls - brick, with cutstone corner  
quoins, water-table, string course,  
window heads and sills

Interior walls - brick party-walls, frame  
partitions

Chimneys - brick

Roof - gambrel on main unit; gable on wings,  
all slate covered

Historical Data:

This is the sole remaining example of the  
Georgian mansion in New Jersey as fully developed with  
central unit and symmetrical flanking wings, a scheme

\* So-called, using the French word for house in honor  
of the Huguenot ancestry of original owner. He came  
of age in 1755, was married by 1757, and so built this  
Georgian style mansion evidently before 1760.

frequently used in the great houses of Maryland and Virginia. Accordingly, this Survey would advertise its unknown or neglected architectural importance. No account of its merits has been found in historical or other publications, the misadventures of its original owner obtaining all attention from writers therein.

Remarkable similarity of its central unit with the Dey Mansion on Totowa Road, Lower Preakness, Passaic County, said to have been built about 1740-50 (surveyed as NJ-17) suggests the inspiration of its design and materials of construction from that well known house. It is obvious, incidentally, that the six-over-six lights in the windows of this unit of house here considered are replacements of nine-over-nine, which latter remain in the windows of the wings. Whether such repairs were necessary from damage done by anti-Loyalist patriots or others, we have been unable to discover.

Tradition and more reliable sources show that this house was owned by Cavalier Jouet(a) at the time

(a) Cavalier Jouet, b. 1734 in Jamaica, West Indies, d. 6 Nov. 1810 aged 76 yrs. in parish of Rawith (or Rawreth), County Essex, Engld., only child of Daniel (d. ca. 1740) and Frances (Hargrave) Jouet of Jamaica, grandson of Daniel (d. 1750) and Mary (Cavalier) Jouet of Elizabethtown, N. J., great grandson of Daniel Jouet (d. 1721) of that town, a Huguenot (Protestant) refugee from the Island of Re, France. "He was left an orphan at about five years and by the terms of his father's will was sent to Elizabethtown, New Jersey, to his grandparents" who "appointed the Rev. Thomas Bradbury Chandler, rector of St. John's Church, Elizabethtown, his guardian." He "lived on a fortune of 800 to 1000 Pounds New Jersey currency, in a house inherited from his grandfather Daniel Jouet. His furniture was of the best mahogany and his library worth 700 Pounds. He built a fine house, still standing, which is one of the historical mansions of America, but the Revolution was approaching and all his interests were with the mother country. Persuaded as he was that the 'Rebellion' would not last many months, Cavalier Jouet.....was content to help the British by 'collecting intelligence, discriminating

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(a) - Continued

the turbulent, and mischievous and dangerous from the loyal and inoffensive', as well as acting as a guide. He had signed an 'Association paper' in support of the American cause, but scratched out his name." After his arrest he was placed on parole, and confined to Bernardsville, Somerset County, in 1776. In a letter dated New York 4 May 1783, Cavalier Jouet wrote "Some little time after the publication of an armistice between the belligerent Powers, I thought it might prove of use to myself and family to pass into the Jerseys, and speculate on the spirit and temper of the times there, in order to determine whether it would be feasible to replace my wife and children in the township where they formerly resided, for the purpose of a more easy maintenance of them, and to be in the way, with the assistance of friends, of finally recovering their property, and accordingly I pitched upon the neighborhood of Woodbridge to make my entrance, where I had been subject for near three years past in the capacity of a prisoner of war on my parole given to General Washington, .....In this place, where I had received much civility for a course of time .....I received the most outrageous insults and narrowly escaped the most shameful and degrading abuse....." In the same year he sought refuge in England, and having finally lost in shipwreck en route what little remained of his means, the British government made a comparatively small award to him for his loyalty. At the age of 49 years, he matriculated at Magdalen Hall (now Hertford College), Oxford, and was subsequently ordained by the Bishop of London and assigned as curate of the parish of Tolles Hunt Major, County Essex, in 1792. In that year he returned to the United States to appeal for the restoration of his confiscated estate, but only the personal property was granted, and then to the three daughters of his first wife. At this visit, he returned to Elizabethtown, New Jersey, and preached in St. John's Church in which he had been a vestryman from 1762. The baptismal font which he had presented had been removed by the antipathy of the patriots and was not restored for 40 years. He soon returned to England and died as curate of the parish of Rawreth, County Essex, 6 Nov. 1810 aged 76 yrs., and was buried there.

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of his arrest<sup>(b)</sup> and confiscation of his property on account of his unpatriotic sympathies and activities

(a) - Continued

By his first wife, Abigail Hatfield of Elizabeth, N. J., Cavalier Jouet had issue: Susannah bapt. 1758, m. Capt. Alex. Cameron, British Army; Xenophon bp. 1760, an officer in N. J. Loyalist brigade, John Troup bp. 1762, also an officer in same; Mary bp. 1765, m. Aaron Dayton of Elizabeth; Elizabeth bp. 1768, d. unm.; Daniel bp. 1769; and Sarah m. 1798 in Elizabeth Capt. Jacob De Hart of Phila., Cavalier Jouet mar. 2nd, 30 Sept. 1770, in Elizabeth, Mary Hampton who d. 1827, and had issue: Anne Crosdale m. there 1808 Isaac H. Williams (Govr. of N. J. 1817-29); Hannah Hampton bp. 1773, m. Maj. Philip Van Courtlandt of Onondaga Co., N. Y.; and Frances Hargrave bp. 1775, m. Matthias H. Williamson, M.D., of Elizabeth. (N. Y. Genealog. & Biogr. Record XIX, 151; Collections of N. J. Hist. Soc. X, 108-112. Register of St. John's Ch. Elizabeth, publ. in Geneal. Mag. N. J., III, V, VI, and X. N. J. Archives XXIII, 269; XXX, 273-4 XXXII, 182).

(b) "Wednesday, July 31 (1776) Ordered, That Chevalier Jouet have leave, on his parole, drawn in the usual manner, and on going bond with security, in the sum of one thousand Pounds for the faithful performance of his parole, to remove to the dwelling house of Mr. White, innkeeper, in Barnardsville, in the County of Somerset, and there, or within a circle of four miles thereof, remain, and not depart the said bounds unless with leave of his Convention, or the future Legislature of his State." (Minutes of the Provincial Congress and the Council of Safety of the State of New Jersey, 1775-76, publ. 1879, p. 526).

in 1778.(c) Put up at auction in 1779 by the Commissioners of Forfeited Estates of Essex County, the Mansion was sold apparently to Nathaniel Hubbel(d) son of the rector of St. John's Church, who may not have made full settlement for it. The public records of the County contain no transfers of this property from that time until 1813, when it appears of record as the property of Dr. Gideon De Camp.(e)

(c) "Elizabeth Town, 14 November 1778. At an inferior Court of Sommon Pleas held for the county of Essex on the 15th day of September last, were returned inquisitions for joining the army of the King of Great Britain and other treasonable practices were found against Cavilier Jewit" (and 21 others named). On 17 February 1779, final judgment was entered against all these persons, except Job and Abel Hetfield, Jacob Tooker and John Stites jun.; and their estates sold at auction. (N. J. Gazette, Nos. 50 and 64, cited in Hatfield, History of Elizabeth, N. J., 1868, p. 469).

(d) "Essex County, State of New Jersey. Whereas inquisitions having been found and final judgment entered in favour of the State, against the following fugitives and offenders, viz. (14 names, not including Jouet). Notice is hereby given that all the real estate that lately belonged to the above fugitives, within the bounds of Elizabeth Town will be sold at public vendue on Monday the 16th day of August next at the house of Samuel Smith, innkeeper, in Elizabeth-Town aforesaid, or on the premises, and also that part of the estate late the property of Cavalier Jouet which was sold to a certain Nathaniel Hubbel, unless the said Hubbel appears and pays the purchase money for the same before the day of sale. The vendue to begin at 10 o'clock of said day and continue by adjournments till the whole are sold. Particular descriptions and attendance will be given at the time and place of sale by John Clawson, Daniel Marsh, commissioners, Elizabeth Town, July 6th, 1779. (Newspapers Abstracts, publ. in N.J. Archives 2d. series, III, 508).

(e) Gideon De Camp, b. 1744 at Westfield, N.J., son of Morris De Camp, was a physician and owned lands near Westfield. He is buried on the road between Westfield and Rahway; tombstone reads "died December 18, 1815 aged 71 years". His daughter Elizabeth mar. Jacob De Hart and had issue baptized in St. John's Ch., Elizabeth, N.J., viz. John 1794, Louisa, Gideon De C. 1799 and Juliet Philips 1807. (Morrison's De Camp Genealogy, 1900, p. 51. Genealog. Mag. N.J., V & VI)

By his will dated 6 December of that year and proved 13 January 1816, Gideon De Camp of Essex County ordered his executors to sell and convey all his real and personal estate and divide the proceeds among his four grandchildren, John, Louisa, Gideon and Juliet P. De Hart, when of age 21.

Accordingly, by deed of 3 December 1819, Ralph Phillips of Maidenhead, Hunterdon County (i.e. Lawrenceville, Mercer Co.) executor of the will of Dr. Gideon De Camp, decd., conveyed to Dr. Oliver H. Spencer for \$6800, a "certain dwelling house and out houses with land", in the Borough of Elizabeth Town, being 18 acres on both sides of the "Great Six Rods Road leading from Elizabethtown to Milton and New Brunswick".

Dr. Oliver H. Spencer who thus acquired the property in 1819, held and occupied the same at the date of his will, 18 May 1824 (proved 1st June following) in which he describes himself as of Elizabethtown, formerly of New Orleans. He empowered his executors to sell "the house and land where I now live if thought desirable" and devised the use of the proceeds and the balance of the estate to his wife Hannah\* during her widowhood and afterwards to his children, Robert, Mary Gibbons, Susan Williamson, Dayton, and Anna Ogden Spencer equally as they came of age 21 years. Accordingly, by their deed of 1st May 1826 the executors of the estate of Oliver H. Spencer, deceased, conveyed to Philip Ricketts of Elizabeth, for \$6000, the "mansion house late the residence of the said" Spencer, with its 18 acre tract conveyed to him in 1819 as cited above.

By deed of 5 May 1826, Philip Ricketts, above named grantee, and his wife Mary, of Elizabeth, N. J., conveyed to Peter Kean of Union Township, Essex County, N. J., for the same price, the same 18 acre tract and the mansion house thereon, in trust for John Thorp Lawrence and his wife Julia, late Julia Ricketts, also of Elizabeth, N. J. The trustee Peter Kean died before 1st April 1829, on which date Beverly Robinson of New York City was appointed in his place by the Lawrences.

\* A daughter of Genl. Jonathan Dayton of Elizabeth.

Subsequently, by deed of 14 November 1833 Robinson, as trustee of the estate of Julia Lawrence, with John Thorp Lawrence and wife, Julia, of Elizabeth, N. J., conveyed to Dr. Moses Marsh Woodruff of same place for \$5000, the same 18 acre tract and the "Mansion house late the residence of Dr. Oliver H. Spencer" decd., upon the "Great Six Rods Road from Elizabeth to New Brunswick". From Dr. Woodruff and wife it passed by deed of 1 October 1835 to Pliny Freeman of New York City and from him by deed of 15 April 1845 to Julius A. Fay of Elizabeth Town, N. J., with other land.(f)

The last named died in Elizabeth, probably in this house, 15 November 1887, having devised his estate to his wife Margaret R. Fay. But in 1879 he had mortgaged the premises to the Trustees for the Support of the Public Schools of New Jersey, and after foreclosure proceedings it was taken and sold by the Sheriff to those Trustees by deed of 19 October 1891, being "A portion of the homestead property" having 373 feet frontage on the south side of Rahway Avenue and 442 on the west side of Grove Street at their intersection, "including the mansion house of Julius A. Fay, which he purchased of Pliny Freeman" in 1845. The Trustees conveyed to Frank Schmieder and wife, of Elizabeth, N. J., by their deed of 21 February 1906 the same property and they resided in the mansion until their deaths, respectively in 1916 and 1922. His second wife and widow continued residence in the mansion and died in 1929, whereupon the executor of the Schmieder estate conveyed it to his four children by deed of 2 April 1930 in equal division among them. They remained as joint owners at the time of our Survey.

(f) "The Old Chateau, 408 Rahway Avenue, on the estate belonging to Cavalier Jouet, grandfather of the late Chancellor, Benjamin Williamson.....A famous school for boys was conducted here for many years by the late Julius A. Fay." Nearly opposite is the site of the home of Daniel Jouet, grandfather of said Cavalier, said to have been built before 1750. (Kelly and Dix, Historic Elizabeth, 1932, pp. 45 and 46.)



Previously, by deeds of 1918, 1921 and 1922, Mr. Schmieder had sold of three lots of 50, 100 and 36 feet frontage on Rahway Avenue to J. Lapp, M. Minkin, and Margaret R. Colgan respectively, leaving the mansion house on a lot of 187 feet frontage.

On 6 March 1938, when occupied by three or more tenant families, a fire starting in a bathroom damaged the modern frame two story porches at the rear of the mansion, and a lieutenant of firemen was killed by their collapse, but the mansion house itself fortunately escaped. One of the owners, Henry Schmieder, architect, examined the structure at the time and declared that "No damage was done to the colonial portion of the house, and its historic value therefore is unimpaired." The late Warren R. Dix unsuccessfully advocated public purchase of the building and restoration as a museum(g), a means of preservation highly desirable at this writing.

Reference:

Search of title in land and probate records of Essex and of Union Counties by James Hanlon, H.A.B.S. abstractor, reported 1941

*Louis D. Cook*

Supervising Historian 8 August 1941

Approved:

*SEYMOUR WILLIAMS*

SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F. A. I. A.  
District Officer

(g) The Elizabeth Daily Journal, 7 March 1938.